United Nations A/C.3/72/SR.8

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
25 October 2017

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 5 October 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson ..... (Iceland)
later: Mr. Idris (Vice-Chair) ..... (Eritrea)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/72/38)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/72/93, A/72/134, A/72/207 and A/72/215)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/72/203 and A/72/220)

1. **Mr. Jaime Calderon** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the States members of CELAC remained firmly committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Despite significant progress since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, much remained to be done. They were especially concerned about the feminization of poverty, persistent high levels of violence against women and girls and structural inequalities that perpetuated the cycle of poverty, marginalization and inequality.

2. The CELAC countries were committed to strengthening their national policies and laws on women's rights and empowerment. They were also committed to combating all forms of violence against women, including genital mutilation, forced marriage and human trafficking, as well as violence related to drug and sexual trafficking, organized crime and other forms of exploitation. They would continue to work to enhance women's economic independence and to guarantee their human rights, including their rights to quality medical care and education and to protection from gender-based violence.

3. The Community reiterated the importance of ensuring women's equal access to education and training, as well as access to maternal, sexual and reproductive health care and to decent, productive work, and recognized the vital role of men and boys as agents of change for achieving gender equality and empowering women. It attached particular importance to the protection of migrant and rural women and children.

4. Those countries were committed to overcoming the patriarchal stereotypes that perpetuated the unequal distribution of labour and ending the undervaluation and invisibility of "women's work". They also undertook to promote access to decent employment for all women, and would ramp up their efforts to develop women's full potential and to address violence and discrimination against them, with special attention to those who suffered multiple forms of discrimination.

5. CELAC recognized the important contribution of feminist organizations, women's movements and civil society organizations, as well as the need for strengthening and coordination. The CELAC countries had established a working group on the advancement of women. At the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, they had adopted the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, and they would soon meet in Havana, Cuba, for a session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin American and Caribbean Development marking its fortieth anniversary. They welcomed the recent regional consultations in Panama with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), as well as the resulting Declaration of Panama, which defined a regional approach to empowering women economically.

6. **Mr. Matjila** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that, in keeping with the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in the SADC founding treaty, its member States had committed in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development to empowering women, eliminating discrimination and achieving gender equality and equity. More recently, they had taken steps to implement and mainstream those objectives through the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative and the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan.

7. However, despite those and other efforts, women, especially rural women, continued to face many challenges in their region, including with respect to access to and ownership of resources; social and economic exclusion; intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination; gender-based violence; inadequate investment in social protection and limited funding for women's economic empowerment. Furthermore, women and girls were disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa, which remained at the epicentre of the epidemic. The member States were continuing the initiatives launched under the SADC HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework, which included condom promotion and distribution, campaigns to encourage HIV awareness and behavioural change, HIV testing and counselling, promotion of safe medical conditions, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, HIV treatment and home-based care.

8. Even working together, the SADC member States did not have the means to tackle all of the challenges facing Southern African women. They appreciated the support of their development partners and the international community and called for more and stronger partnerships for the advancement of women in the region.

9. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Turkey, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, said that early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and physical and sexual violence against women remained widespread, and many women were leaving their countries to escape exploitation and violence. The international community must address the root causes of gender-based violence, including by enlisting the support of men and boys.

10. The European Union invested more in gender equality than any other entity. In September, during the launch of the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women, it had pledged €500 million for the operations of the Initiative. It had recently signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and it had taken over leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. All European Union-funded humanitarian operations were required to conduct a gender analysis and emphasized full implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, pursuant to the European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. Furthermore, in accordance with the recently adopted European Consensus on Development, development assistance was increasingly being used to advance the rights of women and girls.

11. The European Union would continue to work with its partner countries to promote women's rights and to make institutions more transparent, participatory and accountable. Civil society organizations were also vital partners. It recognized the key role played by UN-Women in mainstreaming gender equality, empowering women and girls and eliminating violence against them and strongly encouraged further gender mainstreaming in the United Nations peace and security architecture.

12. **Ms. Morton** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland, said that those countries remained committed to Sustainable Development Goal 5 and would continue to emphasize gender equality as a cross-cutting goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Their delegations particularly welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve gender parity in the United Nations system, including through his new System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, and they encouraged UN-Women and all United Nations agencies to continue to implement the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. In the work ahead, it was essential for the United Nations to respond promptly to new challenges and for its Members to cooperate in ensuring that all of the relevant legal frameworks, political declarations and resolutions were properly implemented in every country.

13. **Ms. Nunoshiba** (Japan) said that Japan welcomed the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and would do its part to ensure implementation. At the national level, its first action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was proceeding apace.

14. All development actors, including the United Nations, needed to pool their efforts to achieve the Goal 5 targets. With that in mind, Japan was continuing to ramp up its international cooperation and development assistance. In December 2016, at the World Assembly for Women, it had committed to providing more than $3 billion over three years for the promotion of women's participation and advancement in developing countries, and it had become the second largest donor to UN-Women. In July 2017, it had pledged $50 million to the new Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi). Every year since 2014, it had hosted the World Assembly for Women to discuss various aspects of women's empowerment with the world's top women leaders and other relevant stakeholders.

15. **Ms. Kirianoff Crimmins** (Switzerland) said that her country had recently adopted its first gender equality and women's rights strategy, confirming its strong commitment to the advancement of women. In view of the heavy burden of discrimination on rural women, efforts must be redoubled to strengthen their economic independence and their participation in rural development and decision-making. Switzerland was supporting projects at home and abroad to increase the presence and role of women in agricultural organizations and to raise public awareness of rural women's contribution to agriculture as well as the specific challenges facing them. Through its international development assistance, it was working to reduce rural women's unpaid labour by building infrastructure, improving water and sanitation systems and introducing innovative agricultural technologies.

16. Basic health care should include a full range of sexual and reproductive health services. Switzerland was determined to advance the political dialogue on that subject through a rights- and evidence-based approach.

17. **Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay) said that his Government was working to ensure civil, political and social equality for women in accordance with the Paraguayan Constitution. Its third national plan on equalizing opportunities between women and men focused on equal access to political and social participation; decent jobs; education; comprehensive health care; a healthy, clean environment and freedom from violence. Paraguay had laws on breastfeeding, domestic labour and protection of women from violence, as well as public policies on rural women. Its chief conditional cash transfer scheme gave priority to women heads of household, and it would soon be establishing a centre exclusively for women that would provide comprehensive financial empowerment services, sexual and reproductive health care and violence prevention and support services.

18. It was necessary to address the structural factors undermining women's empowerment and rights and to respond appropriately to the needs of the most vulnerable groups of women. The States must demonstrate the political will to incorporate a gender perspective in their development plans and programmes and to implement measures strengthening women's participation at all levels of decision-making.

19. **Ms. Aanzi** (Netherlands) said that the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report noted a widening gender gap in many countries, including in the Netherlands. Moreover, the Secretary-General's report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2017/66) indicated little progress on Goal 5. At the current pace, it would take over a hundred years to attain the Goal 5 targets. Closing the gap required opportunity, support and commitment: opportunity for women to develop and participate fully in society and long-term support and commitment from politicians, governments, employers, women and men. Indeed, the support and commitment of men was pivotal.

20. In 2017, women remained conspicuously absent in the upper echelons of business and government in the Netherlands. But, with opportunity, commitment and support, that could change in a generation. After all, thanks to quality education for all, her parents, who were illiterate Moroccan immigrants, had raised a family of successful university graduates.

21. **Ms. Cupellini** (Italy) said that real empowerment started with the eradication of every form of violence against women, including harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage. In 2017, Italy had given €1.4 million to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) core budget and €1.8 million to the joint programme of UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the elimination of female genital mutilation. In July, it had hosted the BanFGM Conference on the campaign for a worldwide ban on female genital mutilation.

22. Under the ongoing Italian presidency of the Group of Seven (G-7), gender equality had been placed at the core of the G-7 agenda, and at the May summit, its leaders had adopted a road map for a gender-responsive economic environment. Italy would continue to promote gender equality within the Group, including by hosting the first G-7 ministerial meeting on equal opportunities in November.

23. In conflict and emergency situations, Italy made preventing sexual violence and gender-based violence a central focus of its own actions, and it contributed financially to bilateral and multilateral programmes aimed at protecting women's rights to health, safety and dignity in such circumstances. Migrant women, who were more exposed to violence, human trafficking and slavery, required particular attention.

24. Implementation of the women, peace and security agenda would continue to be a top priority for Italy during its term on the Security Council, where it had been a driving force behind the soon-to-be-launched Mediterranean women mediators network. At home, it had recently adopted its third national action plan on women, peace and security.

25. **Mr. Sauer** (Finland) said that women's and girls' rights continued to be violated on an unacceptable scale all over the world. The intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination against disabled women and girls were of particular concern. Guaranteeing their rights required a paradigm shift in social norms and attitudes that many States were far from internalizing. The right to individual autonomy was at the core of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and Finland was continuing to explore ways to promote the self-determination of disabled persons as full members of the community, in close cooperation with civil society.

26. The international human rights framework provided the tools for ensuring that women's and girl's rights were respected in both the public and the private spheres. What was lacking was action. In that regard, UN-Women was the exception. Since its establishment,

it had been a driving force in promoting normative change and advancing gender equality.

27. Finland was proud to be part of the SheDecides initiative, which was rolling out sexual and reproductive health services on a global scale. Denying girls the right to decide could have serious consequences. The leading cause of death of girls aged 15 to 19 was suicide, followed by pregnancy-related causes.

28. Many governments, including his own, were struggling to address violence against women and girls. One key challenge in Finland was the shortage of facilities and services for women who had experienced violence. As a HeForShe IMPACT champion, the President of Finland had personally committed to ending violence against women, promoting women's economic empowerment and implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

29. *Mr. Idris (Eritrea), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

30. **Ms. Gan** (Singapore) said that Singapore had always prioritized the development of its people, who were its most valuable resource. Women enjoyed equal rights and robust legal protections. Almost all women aged 15 or older were literate, and more than 50 per cent of full-time university students were women. Moreover, women had made inroads in traditionally male-dominated professions such as engineering, medicine and politics. Singapore had recently elected its first woman president, and as of the most recent general elections, almost a quarter of the seats in Parliament were held by women. In 2016, Singapore had ranked eleventh out of 159 countries on the Gender Inequality Index.

31. In response to the underrepresentation of women in business leadership positions, her Government had established the Diversity Action Committee, which had set a target of 20 per cent women on corporate boards by 2020. To encourage women to enter and remain in the workforce, Singapore provided employment assistance and training and had implemented measures to promote work-life harmony and flexible work arrangements. It would continue to partner with individuals, companies and civil society to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

32. **Ms. Treuno** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that women and girls were being left behind. She was disappointed that the ministerial declaration adopted at the July session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development made no mention of women's human rights. If discussions similar to the Beijing negotiations were to be held in 2017, there would be no Declaration and Platform for Action. Such backsliding was unacceptable in a world where no country had achieved gender equality and women, especially vulnerable groups such as indigenous, refugee and disabled women, continued to suffer exclusion, marginalization, discrimination, violence and femicide.

33. Mexico rejected the false dichotomy between protecting sexual and reproductive rights and protecting families. Women's control over their own bodies went beyond sexual and reproductive health. It empowered them, to the benefit of their families and society.

34. Gender equality was a cross-cutting issue of the 2030 Agenda, and its 17 Goals could not be attained without women's participation. Mexico was investing in education for women and girls as well as in promoting equal political participation. However, to target public policies correctly, the Member States needed better gender-related data and statistics. They must continue working with UN-Women, the United Nations system and the regional mechanisms to improve statistical systems and data disaggregation.

35. **Ms. Salazar Mujica** (Peru) said that, in keeping with the cross-cutting focus on gender equality in the 2030 Agenda, her Government had mainstreamed gender equality across public institutions. It was implementing gender equality policies alongside a 2016–2021 national plan to combat gender violence. It was also promoting women's empowerment and access to financial products, technology, markets, procurement, skills development and social protection. For example, the State provided technical support to micro- and small enterprises for strengthening business networks, and it had enacted laws giving those enterprises official status and encouraging their development. Peru was committed to strengthening the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national gender equality programmes and would incorporate a gender focus at all levels of public administration.

36. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) said that his country's first national plan of action on violence against women (2017–2020) committed it to implementing programmes to eradicate gender-related violence and empower women and girls in every way, including through political and economic autonomy. Its gender polices sought to empower all women, but especially those affected by violence and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

37. In the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda, Argentina attached importance to exchanges of

experiences, international cooperation, cooperation with civil society and promotion of public-private partnerships. His delegation welcomed the decision of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to revive the discussion on the adequacy of international, regional and national legal frameworks to prevent and combat violence against women, including with regard to the creation of a new legal instrument addressing violence against women, and it joined the Secretary-General in calling on States to ensure the realization of women migrant workers' human rights and to take rural women and girls into account when developing economic and social policies on education, health, employment and financial and digital inclusion. It also welcomed his new System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity.

38. **Ms. Kabia** (Sierra Leone) said that, as part of its National Action Plan on Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), Sierra Leone had created a mechanism to ensure that gender equality received systematic attention and resources in its recovery, reintegration and reconstruction efforts. Its firm commitment to reducing the gender gap was illustrated by its enactment of a series of laws addressing gender-related challenges, its ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, its efforts in areas such as maternal and child mortality and its free health care programme for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under age 5, which had unfortunately been interrupted in 2014 by the Ebola epidemic. It looked forward to sustained cooperation and partnership in mobilizing the resources required to ensure progress at all levels. In view of the importance of building structures that promoted the advancement of women and prioritized inclusive and sustainable industrialization, technology transfer and market access, it appealed for the mobilization of increased official development assistance to fund implementation of the new development agenda and other internationally agreed agendas concerning women.

39. **Mr. Locsin** (Philippines) said that, with more than 5 million Filipino women working abroad, the promotion and protection of their rights was a top priority for his Government. A 2016 act amending the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act placed greater emphasis on making welfare assistance, services and programmes for overseas workers gender-responsive, and participation of women migrant workers in policy-making bodies had been institutionalized. In 2016, more than 115,000 women migrants had received comprehensive repatriation services and reintegration preparedness training. Moreover, there was a dedicated fund for assistance to overseas Filipinos and a 24-hour hotline for victims of human trafficking, most of whom were women and girls. However, his Government was still seeking effective ways to prevent recruitment agencies from abusing migrant workers.

40. With respect to women's economic empowerment, the Philippines was providing technical assistance to more than 2,000 microenterprises to improve their competitiveness and sustainability. It also encouraged rural women to strengthen their negotiating positions by organizing, and it provided access to training and women-friendly equipment and technologies in rural areas. Furthermore, the agencies in charge of agrarian and agricultural reform were required to spend at least 5 per cent of their budgets on improving rural women's access to time- and labour-saving infrastructure and technologies.

41. **Ms. Yankssar** (Saudi Arabia) said that, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it was necessary to create an enabling environment for women and empower them socially, economically and politically. In line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report on women and girls in rural areas (A/72/207), Saudi Arabia had established mobile rural clinics and had launched a remote employment initiative to make it possible for women to work at home. To discourage child, early and forced marriage, it had adopted laws empowering women to manage their own affairs and those of their families. It had set up a fund to provide pensions for women abandoned by their husbands, and women could now apply for government services unconditionally. Women had also recently been granted authorization to drive. Not only were women present in increasing numbers in the workforce, political office and foreign affairs, but they also occupied senior positions in finance, education and local government. In addition, the religious police force had begun forming an all-women unit.

42. Saudi Arabia decried the inability of Palestinian women to realize their human rights under Israeli occupation and oppression. It would cooperate fully with efforts to empower women, combat all forms of discrimination against them and improve their situation in accordance with Islamic law.

43. **Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer** (Brazil) said that the member States of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries were proud to have submitted the draft resolution on the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls and the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the

implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/HRC/36/L.12) adopted by the Human Rights Council at its thirty-sixth session. Brazil had launched several key initiatives for the empowerment of women, including a programme to foster more equitable working relations in the public and private sectors. To reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid care work, it had recently adopted measures increasing paternity leave from 5 to 20 days and expanding support for breastfeeding mothers and breastmilk donation. It was endeavouring to promote women's economic autonomy, with particular attention to policies on poverty eradication, and to strengthen women's participation and leadership in politics as well as in decision-making bodies and positions.

44. Under its programme to combat violence against women, Brazil had established facilities providing comprehensive assistance to women victims of violence in each state and had expanded the women's health centres. It was also deploying mobile units to assist women facing violence in rural areas and was conducting continuous awareness-raising campaigns. In addition, it had long had police units specializing in crimes with women victims.

45. Last but not least, Brazil recognized the importance of fully engaging men and boys as allies in the empowerment of women and girls.

46. **Ms. Morton** (Australia) said that her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and urged UN-Women and all United Nations entities to continue their efforts to implement the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

47. Australia had a long-standing commitment to promoting and delivering sexual and reproductive health services and provided long-term funding for them. Although discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status or family responsibilities had long been illegal, Australian women did not enjoy the same employment opportunities as men and earned significantly less for equal work. In July, her Government had launched a strategy to shrink the gap between men's and women's participation in the labour market by 25 per cent by 2025.

48. At the international level, Australia's flagship gender equality programme, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, supported projects aimed at enabling women in 14 countries to participate fully, freely and safely in political, economic and social life. In South-East Asia, its Investing in Women initiative worked with business to improve employment practices for women and increase investment in women-led small- and medium-sized enterprises.

49. **Ms. Gonzalez Tolosa** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her country had integrated a gender perspective into all of its public policies and was implementing policies and programmes to protect women's human rights and foster their participation in every aspect of national life. The legal framework for gender equality and equity had been expanded to provide unprecedented protection and was written in gender-inclusive, non-sexist language. Furthermore, the social investment budget, which accounted for three quarters of public spending, guaranteed funding for women's advancement. Gender parity had been achieved in primary and secondary education, and 60 per cent of university students were women. The percentage of women unemployed or employed in unpaid labour had shrunk from 16 per cent to less than 8 per cent, and 60 per cent of all pensioners were women. Household labour and family care were considered productive employment, and women working in informal sectors were included in the social security system. Domestic work was treated as a value-adding economic activity.

50. Her Government had taken steps to protect sexual and reproductive rights, improve maternity outcomes and discourage teenage pregnancy. In accordance with the organic law on the right of women to a life free from violence, it had developed policies guaranteeing legal and psychological services for women victims of violence.

51. However, women's rights could only be realized in a climate of respect, dignity, equality, non-violence and peace, and the only way to achieve peace was by preserving sovereignty, self-determination and respect for diversity.

52. **Ms. Plepytė** (Lithuania) said that real progress towards gender parity and women's advancement depended on wholehearted commitment and action at the national level. Lithuania regularly updated its national programme on equal opportunities for women and men and had recently made gender impact assessment mandatory for all governmental programmes, policies and legal decisions. In addition to causing physical and psychological harm, violence against women had direct and indirect costs for the victims and society. High quality comparable data on those costs would make it possible to measure the impact of violence and target measures for addressing it. Under the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of 2011, Lithuania had adopted a results-oriented approach that included awareness-raising

campaigns, competence-building and cooperation with local institutions and civil society. It promoted equal sharing of household and childcare responsibilities by, inter alia, ensuring equal access to parental leave and the availability of quality childcare and dependent care services.

53. Lithuania was also an active advocate of gender equality at the international level. In May, it had hosted the first Asia-Europe Meeting on women's economic empowerment.

54. **Ms. Al-Nasairi** (Iraq) said that her country was preparing its periodic report for presentation to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2018. The Iraqi Constitution gave women the right to participate in public affairs, as well as to vote and to nominate, and the provincial election law set a minimum quota for women on provincial councils. Iraq had a personal status law that, inter alia, allowed mothers to transmit citizenship to their children, as well as laws establishing social protection for single and divorced women and privileges for working women. It had developed a women's advancement strategy and established a high-level office of women's affairs.

55. With respect to violence against women, the community police directorate had been equipped for rapid response to complaints of violence against women and domestic violence. It had also designated an annual national day for the elimination of violence against women. In cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, projects had been undertaken to empower rural women through micro-loans. Furthermore, following the defeat of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), it had come to the aid of women who had survived horrendous human rights violations.

56. **Ms. Likina** (Russian Federation) said that the Commission on the Status of Women had proven its effectiveness and should remain the primary body of the United Nations system for gender issues. Her delegation was pleased with the work of UN-Women over the past two years, including its recent adoption of a strategic plan for 2018–2021. However, it wished to reiterate that UN-Women must involve all groups of countries without exception and should be present and provide assistance on the ground solely at the request and with the permission of the State concerned; its role was one of secondary support only.

57. Her Government had mainstreamed gender issues in its recently adopted demographic and family policies and strategy for older people. Its 2017–2022 national strategy for women would be implemented by a coordinating council of representatives of the executive and legislative branches of government and civil society, which had met for the first time on 14 September to develop a plan for phase 1 of the strategy.

58. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, since the 1920s, women had been fully equal to men under his country's constitutions and laws, and their achievements had surpassed those of their counterparts in the region. In 1948, Syrian women had been the first in the region to gain the right to vote in parliamentary elections. The first woman member of parliament had been elected in 1975, and first woman speaker of parliament, in 2016. The vice president was also a woman.

59. Over the previous six years, Syrian women had borne the brunt of the most heinous forms of terrorism and extremism. Many had been killed by terrorists merely for having a Facebook account. Others had chosen suicide as an alternative to forced marriage or rape by terrorists, and hundreds of Syrian girls had been kidnapped and sold into slavery by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front. Syrian women had endured abysmal conditions in refugee camps and aboard the ships of death on the Mediterranean, which had become a source of income for Turkish mafias, and some were suffering under Israeli occupation in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan. It was high time for the countries involved in the war to stop supporting terrorism in Syria, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014).

60. **Ms. Myo** (Myanmar) said that after decades of armed conflict and underdevelopment, Myanmar was determined to build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society, which would be impossible without empowering women. With the support of the United Nations country team Gender Theme Group and more than a hundred civil society organizations, it was working to put gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of its development strategies. The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013–2022 covered key aspects of the United Nations agenda for women's empowerment. In addition, improvements in health care and education would reduce maternal and infant mortality and increase access to education. With regard to rural women, Myanmar's National Community-Driven Development Project mainstreamed a gender focus, and it had recently launched the i-Woman Mobile Application, which was designed to connect, empower and foster leadership among rural women.

61. To tackle violence against women, her Government was drafting a law on the prevention of violence against women in cooperation with the Gender Theme Group. Because most victims of human trafficking in Myanmar were trafficked into neighbouring countries, it had signed memorandums of understanding on human trafficking with China and Thailand in 2009. It had also ratified the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

62. **Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia) said that, as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters, women could act as catalysts for change and development. Accordingly, Mongolia's Sustainable Development Vision — 2030 pledged to promote gender equality and empower women and girls. In 2017, it had revised its domestic violence law to criminalize domestic violence for the first time and had amended the Criminal Code and the law on victim and witness protection accordingly. Its gender equality law, which emphasized women's equal participation in all sectors and raised the quota for women at the political decision-making level, was backed by a national gender equality programme. Lastly, it had enacted a law on childcare services to support women's economic empowerment.

63. **Ms. Nguyen Lien** Huong (Viet Nam) said that her country had long recognized that successful development depended on women's participation in all spheres of life. In application of the Law on Gender Equality, her Government had incorporated gender equality consistently throughout the legal system and was implementing a national strategy. Progress thus far had been encouraging. The chair and a deputy chair of the National Assembly were women, as were ministers or deputy ministers in 15 out of 30 ministries. Gender quality had been achieved in secondary and higher education, and maternity leave had been increased from four to six months.

64. As one of the five countries most affected by climate change, Viet Nam was especially concerned about the impact of climate change on rural women, particularly poor rural women, who were less resilient to floods, storms and drought. Women played a large role in response, recovery and reconstruction, and one of the best ways to mitigate the impact of climate change on rural women was to enlist their support, develop their capacities and build their resilience to future disasters. Viet Nam would continue to champion the role of women in coping with climate change and looked forward to the support and assistance of the international community.

65. **Ms. Simpson** (United States of America) said that her Government considered empowering and promoting women in business an absolute priority and would continue to address the barriers faced by women professionals and entrepreneurs. In July 2017, it had pledged $50 million to the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, a new multi-donor facility that would expand access to financial services for women entrepreneurs and help them surmount gender-related barriers. The United States had collaborated with the private sector on initiatives linking women entrepreneurs with others in their regions, including Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas, African Women's Entrepreneurship Program and Women's Entrepreneurship in APEC. It was a member of the Alliance for Artisan Enterprise, which provided support for many women artisans. It had also partnered with the private sector to establish business centres that helped women start, register and grow companies and, in some cases, engaged men and boys to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. In November, the United States and India would co-host the 2017 Global Entrepreneur Summit, on the theme "Women First, Prosperity for All".

66. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica) said that his country had the highest proportion of women managers in the world. Nevertheless, there were still inequities between men and women in both the public and the private spheres, and the advancement of women remained a top priority. Jamaica was a member of the Group of Champions of Women's Economic Empowerment. It was continuing to implement a national gender equality strategy aimed at mainstreaming gender in national development, and Parliament had recently resumed its review of four laws addressing violence against women. Jamaica had ratified several gender-related international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and three International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. In that connection, it was planning legal reforms to protect informal workers and promote the formalization of their work in accordance with ILO Recommendation No. 204.

67. **Mr. Hattrem** (Norway) said that the most difficult job lay ahead: reaching the women bypassed by progress in health and education because they were poor, lived in rural areas, belonged to ethnic minorities or had disabilities. Gender had played an important role in Norway's journey from poverty to prosperity. In fact, working women contributed more to its economy than oil and gas. Equality was its most valuable investment, and it would be just as profitable for other

countries. The world's most gender-equal countries were also the most highly developed.

68. Norway had doubled its aid to global education over the preceding four years because investing in education, particularly for girls, was the most effective way of promoting sustainable development.

69. Child marriage was harmful for the child and harmful for development. No society could afford not to invest in its girls and include its women in the workforce. Violence against women also had enormous costs for both victim and society. Norway would never accept so-called traditional values as an excuse for denying women and girls their rights.

70. **Mr. Bukoka** (Zambia) said that, to accelerate attainment of Goal 5, his Government had promulgated the Gender Equity and Equality Act which, inter alia, established a framework for improving women's access to productive resources. It was also implementing the Girls' Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Project, which would give girls from extremely poor families support for enrolment in secondary school and provide entrepreneurial training and business grants for vulnerable women. To speed prosecution and reduce the backlog of cases of gender-based violence, it had established two user-friendly fast-track courts, and it hoped to launch more soon.

71. Zambia had cut child marriage by 10 per cent thanks to a national campaign to end child marriage launched in 2013. It had also made some progress in reducing HIV prevalence in the adult population. To sustain that progress, his Government had rolled out a "test and treat" campaign aimed at universal testing and immediate treatment of those testing positive. Recognizing poverty as one of the underlying cause of HIV infection, it was implementing poverty reduction schemes such as social cash transfers, which targeted extremely poor households often headed by women.

72. **Ms. Khalvandi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her Government was continuing to work to create an enabling environment for women. Its development plan for 2016–2021 mandated a gender perspective in all government planning and programmes. Under a recent executive order, Cabinet ministers were required to set aside 30 per cent of decision-making and management positions for women. In addition, a bill on the protection of women against violence was under consideration, and work was being finalized on a strategic plan on the role of women and family, as well as one on sustainable development and women's sustainable employment.

73. Twice as many women as men were studying medicine and science, thanks to a 40-year emphasis on empowering women and girls through education. Furthermore, the number of woman-owned micro-enterprises and women's cooperatives had increased substantially, and the number of women's non-governmental organizations had tripled since 2013.

74. That progress had occurred against a backdrop of illegal, unilateral sanctions. Elsewhere in the Middle East, foreign intervention and occupation, military invasion and an upsurge in violent extremism and terrorism left little hope for achieving the goals for the advancement of women and girls or, for that matter, any of the other international development goals.

75. **Ms. Mejía Vélez** (Colombia) said that improving the situation of rural women and girls was a central concern of her Government reflected in the final peace agreement with Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Rural women, who had played a key role in ending the conflict and continued to be crucial for peace-building, would be given extra support in rural development programmes.

76. Noting that her delegation had spearheaded the formation of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity in the United Nations, she underlined the importance of the Secretary-General's recently released Strategy on Gender Parity and called on the Member States to work hand in hand to implement it.

77. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that, in support of the declaration by the Egyptian president of 2017 as the year of Egyptian women, her Government had adopted the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, which sought to empower women in the political economic and social spheres, strengthen their role as leaders within the country and enhance social protections for women and girls. Women were increasingly being promoted to leadership roles in the Egyptian Government, civil service and judiciary, and Egypt had recently appointed its first female provincial governor and first female deputy governor of the Central Bank of Egypt.

78. The National Council for Women had held training sessions to promote women's participation in local council elections and, in cooperation with UN-Women, was helping women in remote areas to obtain national identity documents. The National Council on Women had, moreover, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Central Bank of Egypt with a view to promoting Egyptian women's full participation in the economy on an equal footing with men and ensuring that they received a decent

income. The National Council had also launched campaigns to combat discrimination and violence against women and provided financial support to women from marginalized groups. Egypt was also providing training to religious preachers so that they could more effectively address the issue of violence against women. The Ministry of Health had recently issued guidelines on women's health issues at all stages of their lives, including, those related to women's reproductive health.

79. A national conference on women as peacemakers, held in September 2017, had discussed the key role played by women in combating extremism and terrorism. The Office of the Public Prosecutor had, moreover, issued guidelines on offences involving violence against women, was drafting an amended family law, and had established an online portal through which members of the public could propose amendments to existing laws with a view to strengthening the legal rights of Egyptian women. Furthermore, an awareness-raising campaign, launched in early 2017 with a view to promoting tolerance, respect for women, girls' education, women's participation in politics and women's inheritance rights, as well as with a view to combating sexual harassment, underage marriage, female genital mutilation and all other forms of gender-based violence, had reached over one million Egyptian women and their families.

80. Egypt was convinced that bilateral and multilateral cooperation with its international partners could bolster its efforts to promote women's rights; Egypt would therefore continue to work closely with the United Nations, its specialized agencies and other relevant international organizations to achieve that noble goal.

The meeting rose at 5:55 p.m.